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Home grown Hoe

*Local man's
invention
designed for
noxious weed
elimination*

Right, Weeds are no match for Jerry Hoover's Sticker Stalker. The hoe-like device allows the user to extract both weed and taproot, preventing regrowth. Below, Son-in-law Ben Faulk will handle the business end of the operation.

Photos by Kim Lamb



By JOSH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

Cockleburs, goatheds and thistles beware.

A Churchill County rancher has developed a special hoe to permanently remove noxious weeds and their taproots without spreading the seeds, preventing further infestation.

Jerry Hoover, who runs God's Green Acres ranch on Edwards Lane, said years of fighting weeds proved futile with traditional methods, so he started thinking about a better way to deal with the annual onslaught. After combining his farming experience and metal fabrication skills with a touch of entrepreneurial creativity, along came the Sticker Stalker.

"We couldn't find a tool that would work to remove

them," Hoover said. "When you pull one up, a hundred show up for the funeral the next year."

The Sticker Stalker works by dragging it along the ground until the weed's base is centered in the V-shaped notch. Give a slight tug and pivot the hoe back to loosen the taproot, and then pull straight up to remove the weed — roots, seeds and all.

Weed pullers should carry a receptacle with them to collect the weeds, which are removed from the hoe by a few simple shakes, he said.

Hoover said dedicated use of the tool is an effective way to eliminate unwanted foliage.

"We've just about gotten rid of our noxious weeds," he said.

The hoe's blade is also sharpened on the sides,

enabling it to function as a traditional hoe, Hoover said. The edges can be honed for further effectiveness.

The Sticker Stalker features a large-diameter fiberglass shaft and is constructed with high-quality steel to ensure durability, Hoover said.

"I wanted a tool, not a toy," he said.

The hoe's evolution began about four years ago, when Hoover began fiddling with a garden-variety hoe in an effort to improve its design. His early prototypes evolved into the tool with wedge-shaped blade.

"I've learned about 20 ways not to make one," he said.

After constructing a few for his own use, Hoover lent some to friends and family, who were reluctant to give

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HOE

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them back.

Hoover sent his modified hoe back to the manufacturer and even included a video of how it worked.

The company expressed interest and a partnership was formed, but the relationship later soured, he said.

Thus began a long legal dispute to determine ownership and proper usage. Hoover hired a prominent patent attorney to settle the matter.

The Sticker Stalker is now patent pending in his name. Hoover said he originally wanted the hoe produced in the United States, but the cost to the consumer would be much greater. The product is now

made at a plant in Shanghai, China.

Hoover is keeping the final assembly and marketing side of the business in the family.

Son-in-law Ben Faulk, who holds an accounting degree, is running the business end of the venture and assists with marketing.

"When I saw it work, it was a no-brainer," Faulk said. "It's a privilege to help out in the everyday operations."

The tool is advertised as the "second-best tool in the world," trailing only the King James Bible, according to the product's literature.

Hoover's wife Kathleen and daughters Lovinda, Krystal,

Melanie and Marissa help put on the stickers and instructional pamphlet, which are printed in Reno, and the rubber handle end.

The Sticker Stalker will be available this week at Big R, Louie's ACE Home Center and Workman Farms, Hoover said. It will cost about \$22. He's planning to market the product to big box stores such as Home Depot, Lowe's and Wal-Mart as well.

Hoover will also display the product at a booth at the Fallon Farmers Market, which kicks off for the summer on Tuesday on South Maine Street.

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